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ABSTRACT

During the past 20 years great efforts have been made to systematize and institutionalize educational research and development. At the same time, changing government priorities, shifting roles of participating institutions, and the politicization of social research have contributed to discontinuity and turmoil. The time has come to consider knowledge production and utilization (KPU) in education as a research area in its own right. Acknowledging this trend, the National Institute of Education (NIE) undertook two initiatives regarding KPU. First, part of the 1974 grants competition was targeted on KPU research in education. Second, the Research and Development System Support Division of NIE was organized with a major objective being the establishment of a program for monitoring KPU in education. This monitoring program has the following three major activities: (a) designing and collecting a systematic and continuing data base on educational KPU which will tap the major indicators of structure and change in the system, (b) formulating and testing theories and models of system dynamics, and (c) providing analyses and reports to internal policymakers and NIE's various publics. (PB)

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BACKGROUND OF THE NIE PROGRAM OF RESEARCH ON KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND UTILIZATION*

Ward S. Mason

Disciplined inquirey in education has a history that extends back into the last century, as Cronbach and Suppes have reminded us. However, it is fair to say that the modern era began with the advent of Federal programs of support in the mid 1950's.

The past twenty years can be characterized in two contradictory ways. On one hand it has been a period in which there have been great efforts to systematize and institutionalize research and development. For example:

- Many new kinds of institutions were established - research and development centers, regional laboratories, the ERIC system, teacher centers, etc.
- Technologies and methodologies for new processes of development and evaluation were formulated and refined;
- The planning and management of R & D became more self-conscious and systematic as the scope and scale of activity expanded;

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. New occupational and professional specialities were established and new career lines opened, and

. A number of significant laws were passed which regulate such things as protection of human subjects in research, freedom of information, and access to pupil records.

In contrast to these trends toward rationalization have been a number of forces tending toward discontinuity and turmoil:

. Government priorities have changed with the arrival and departure of responsible government officials

. Social research has been politicized as it has moved from the laboratory into the community, and

. The roles of participating institutions - school systems, universities, non-profit institutes, the publishing industry, and others - have shifted as each has jockeyed for position.

Contextual factors have introduced other unsettling influences, including those associated with the issues of war and peace, prosperity and recession, and social reform and reaction.

Throughout, we have shown a talent for impaling ourselves on the horns of false dichotomies:

. External R & D OR local innovation

. Institutional support OR program support

. Structure OR process

These debates have been largely theoretical and polemical. Few attempts have been made to collect systematic data to illuminate the issues. There have been some notable exceptions, of course, including Clark and Hopkins' studies of personnel needs, Hendrik Gideonse' report for OECD on Educational Research and Development in the United States, the Lazarsfeld and Sieber studies of educational research organizations, and the volume on Research for Tomorrow's Schools edited by Cronbach and Suppes. Others might be cited, but these efforts have been essentially ad hoc in that it has been difficult to connect one body of data to another.

The time has come to consider knowledge production and utilization in education as an area of research in its own right. Those who drafted the legislation for the National Institute of Education apparently had arrived at the same conclusion, for they charged NIE with the responsibility for "building an effective educational R & D system". Implicit in this idea is the thought that there are preconditions to

the performance of effective research and development; that it is not enough to "throw money at problems", as the saying goes, but that there must be appropriate technology, qualified personnel, and well-managed institutions for accomplishing such work. Prerequisite to building an effective R & D system is knowledge of how these elements of the infrastructure interrelate dynamically, Such Knowledge will help us to design programs and select policy options which will strengthen the R & D system.

In its first year of operation the Institute established a Task Force on Resource Planning and Analysis. This Task Force spent some time interacting with people in the field and discussing issues with consultants from a variety of disciplines and roles before issuing its report, Building Capacity for Renewal and Reform: An Initial Report on Knowledge Production and Utilization in Education. A principal finding of the report was to show that the emphasis in prior government programs had been on supporting research and development in institutions external to the schools. Dissemination programs existed, but they focused on the flow of information and products from outside sources to the pratitioner, who was viewed as a relatively passive recipient. The report proposed that we change our thinking so as to conceive of a

new more active role for operating schools in conducting disciplined inquiry and in problem-solving. It further proposed that we needed a model which encompassed the full range of processes involved in systematic innovation, including the implementation process, and suggested the substitution of the term "knowledge production and utilization" (or KPU) for "research and development".

Partly as a result of that report, NIE undertook two initiatives:

- First, part of the 1974 grants competition was targeted on research on knowledge production and utilization in education; two of the reports you will hear today are based on researh funded in this program.
- Second the R & D System Support Division was organized having as a major objective the establishment of a program for monitoring KPU in education.

It is this final program which provides the focus for today's symposium. The Monitoring Program has three major activities: (1) designing and collecting a systematic and continuing data base on education KPU which will tap the major indicators of structure and change in the

system; (2) formulating and testing theories and models of system dynamics; and (3) providing analyses and reports to internal policy-makers and NIE's various publics.

Although the program is small, we employ a number of styles and procedures in seeking to promote the study of this field. Several of these are represented by the work to be reported on today. Some of the work is accomplished through letting contracts through competitive Requests for Proposal (RFP's). This is the type of support provided to Bill Paisley, who will report on his efforts to assemble and analyze the existing data on educational KPU, and Mark Markley, who will report on his venture into the relatively new realm of policies governing the system. Secondly, we are building the capacity for intramural research; Rolf Lehming will report on some of the policy issues which are guiding his design of a new survey of various kinds of institutional performers. Third, as mentioned previously, part of the 1974 grant competition was targeted on this problem area, and this is the source of support for two of our other participants: Dave Clark and his colleague Egon Guba are undertaking a major effort to study the roles of schools, colleges and departments of education in KPU, and Michael Radnor is building on his

experience in studying R & D in other sectors to analyze the potential signficance for education of models developed in agriculture, health, industry and other fields. Finally, Stacy Churchill and Burkart Holzner, our two discussants, have contributed to the program through consulting and preparing conceptual papers.

Let me turn then to my colleagues here and ask that they make their presentations in the order listed on the program without further introduction. I think it would be best if you would hold your questions and comments until the end.